NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-0025 JANUARY 23, 1976
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MBFR TALKS RESUME (1/26)

ANNCR:

ON MONDAY (JANUARY 26TH) THE VIENNA CONFERENCE ON MUTUAL BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE -- MBFR -- RESUMES ITS WORK. VOA NEWS ANALYST JOHN ALBERT EXPLAINS WHY THE WESTERN ALLIES APPROACH THE RESUMPTION OF TALKS WITH RENEWED HOPE:

VOICE:

SHORTLY BEFORE ADJOURNMENT, THE VIENNA CONFERENCE RECEIVED A NEW PROPOSAL BY THE NATO NATIONS FOR BREAKING THE EXISTING DEADLOCK IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS ALLIES IN THE WARSAW PACT PROMISED TO UTILIZE THE ADJOURNMENT PERIOD FOR A CAREFUL SCRUTINY OF THESE PROPOSALS. THIS IN ITSELF DOES NOT INDICATE PROGRESS. BUT IF MOSCOW IS, INDEED, INTERESTED IN MOVEMENT IN THESE LENGTHY NEGOTIATIONS, THEN THE NEW ALLIED PROPOSAL SHOULD AT LEAST PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR FRUITFUL DISCUSSIONS. THIS SHOULD ALL THE MORE BE TRUE, BECAUSE SINCE THE START OF THE VIENNA TALKS THE SOVIET UNION HAS CONSISTENTLY STRENGTHENED ITS CONVENTIONAL FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND THUS FURTHER INCREASED THE IMBALANCE BETWEEN THEM AND WESTERN FORCES. THIS IMBLANCE OF COURSE, HAS BEEN THE MAIN SOURCE OF TENSION IN THIS IMPORTANT AREA OF EUROPE FROM THE BEGINNING. AND AS THE WARSAW PACT MAINTAINS THERE MUCH LARGER FORCES THAN CAN BE JUSTIFIED FOR DEFENSIVE PURPOSES, A REALISTIC SOVIET RESPONSE COULD BREAK THE PRESENT DEADLOCK.

LAST MONTH, THE NATO MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ONCE AGAIN NOTED WITH CONCERN "THE CONTINUED RAPID GROWTH OF THE POWER OF THE LAND AND NAVAL FORCES OF THE WARSAW PACT, WHICH EXCEEDS ITS

APPARENT DEFENSIVE NEEDS." BACK IN 1973, DURING THE EARLY PHASES OF THE VIENNA TALKS, THE NATO COUNTRIES NOTED THAT THE WARSAW PACT FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE OUTNUMBERED WESTERN FORCES BY ONE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND MEN AND NINE THOUSAND TANKS. THESE FIGURES HAVE SINCE BEEN OUTDATED BY INCREASED SOVIET ARMAMENT PRODUCTION AND DELIVERY TO THEIR FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE. WHILE NATO FORCES HAVE REMAINED AT THE SAME LEVEL, A RECENT WEST GERMAN DEFENSE MINISTRY REPORT ESTIMATES TODAY'S TOTAL WARSAW PACT TANK STRENGTH IN THE AREA AT 19,000, AN INCREASE OF UP TO 40 PERCENT IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS.

IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT THE MOST RECENT ALLIED PROPOSALS MUST BE JUDGED. IN ADDITION TO A FIRST FORCE REDUCTION ON BOTH THE SOVIET AND AMERICAN SIDE, THE WEST NOW OFFERS TO WITHDRAW ONE THOUSAND OF ITS TACTICAL NUCLEAR WARHEADS IN EUROPE. IN ACTUAL NUMBERS, NATO IS READY TO MOVE TWENTY-NINE THOUSAND AMERICAN TROOPS ALL THE WAY BACK FROM EUROPE TO THE UNITED STATES, IF THE SOVIET UNION WILL PULL BACK THE FEW KILOMETERS TO ITS BORDERS AN ARMY OF 68,000 MEN AND 1700 TANKS.

IT IS QUITE OBVIOUS THAT THE WEST IS ASKING FOR A HIGHER PERCENTAGE CUT IN SOVIET FORCES. THIS HAS BEEN THE MAIN STUMBLING BLOCK TO PROGRESS SO FAR. MOSCOW WANTS ALL CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS TO MAKE AN IMMEDIATE AND EQUAL PERCENTAGE CUT IN THEIR FORCES. IN A SITUATION OF DANGEROUS IMBLANCE BETWEEN THE SUPERIOR STRENGTH OF THE WARSAW PACT VIS-A-VIS THE NATO FORCES SUCH AN EQUAL CUT WOULD, OF COURSE, INCREASE THE

IMBALANCE BETWEEN THE SUPERIOR STRENGTH OF THE WARSAW PACT VIS-A-VIS THE NATO FORCES SUCH AN EQUAL CUT WOULD, OF COURSE, INCREASE THE IMBLANCE AND POSE AN EVEN GREATER THREAT TO MILITARY EQUILIBRIUM IN CENTRAL EUROPE. (OPT) THE THINNER THE FORCES, THE MORE IMPORTANT BECOMES THE SOVIET SUPERIORITY IN MEN AND HEAVY WEAPONS. THE WEST WANTS TO CREATE A SOUND AND EQUITABLE BALANCE IN CENTRAL EUROPE. BUT THAT REQUIRES A LARGER REDUCTION ON THE SOVIET SIDE. ANY OTHER MEASURE WOULD NOT CONTRIBUTE TO SECURITY, BUT WOULD INCREASE INSECURITY. KEND OPT) FURTHER, IN LIGHT OF THE GEOGRAPHIC REALITIES -- THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS TO WITHDRAW ITS FORCES ACROSS AN OCEAN AND THAT THE SOVIET TROOPS HAVE TO PULL BACK ONLY A FEW HUNDRED KILOMETERS AT BEST -- THEN THE ALLIED PROPOSALS APPEAR SOUND, FAIR AND REASONABLE. ON THIS BASIS THERE IS HOPE ON THE WESTERN SIDE THAT THE RECESS IN THE VIENNA TALKS HAS PERMITTED THE OTHER SIDE TO REVIEW THE SITUATION AND TO COME BACK WITH COUNTER PROPOSALS WHICH REPRESENT REAL MOVEMENT IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH HAVE STAGNATED FAR TOO LONG.

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